

# **Why Does God Allow Evil?**

(Planned study guide sessions)

Introduction: In Search of Answers About God and Evil

1. Why Do We Suffer for Adam's Sin?
2. Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?
3. Are There No Good People?
4. What Is the Destiny of the Unevangelized?
5. How Can Eternal Punishment Be Fair?
6. Is Free Will Worth It?
7. Wasn't There Another Way?
8. Will We Have Free Will in Heaven?
9. Will Eternity Be Boring?
10. How Does Eternity Relate to Our Suffering Now?
11. How Does Suffering Relate to Our Eternal Occupation?
- 12 - Epilogue: The Short Answer on Why God Allows Evil
- 13 - Appendix: Satan's Rebellion and God's Response

## Why God Allows Evil – Study Guide – (Session 1 - Introduction)

- A. Personal story and motivation for the book
- B. Goals for the book
- C. Study of good and evil is much of what the Bible is about
- D. Definition of terms
  - 1. Types: evil, moral evil, natural evil, gratuitous evil
  - 2. Problems of evil: logical problem, evidential problem
  - 3. Theodicy
  - 4. Anthropodicy
- E. Why do some people think there is no answer for why God allows evil?
  - 1. Spiritual unreflectiveness
  - 2. Misunderstanding of the depths of human depravity
  - 3. Arrogance (I don't think the Bible should say that!)
  - 4. Ignorance of Christian doctrine
  - 5. Misunderstanding of Job
  - 6. Don't want the problem of evil to be answered
  - 7. Influence of believing in determinism
  - 8. Misunderstanding of the nature and value of free will
  - 9. Misunderstanding of the glory awaiting Christians in heaven
- F. “False Starts” in trying to explain the existence of evil:
  - Thinking God is less than all-powerful
  - Thinking God is less than good
  - Explaining the existence of evil by ignoring Scripture

## Study Questions: Session 1 – Introduction

1. Is there anything at all that you find hard to reconcile with God's goodness?
2. C.S. Lewis said, "Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain that does not do so can be called a Christian one." (*book p. 17*)

What is the point of saying this?

3. Jones assumes that we have "libertarian freedom" (*see "Free will" p. 4*).

Explore the meaning of this:

- a. Do you believe that we have free will?
- b. Even if we have free will, what might limit our choices?
- c. What are some important consequences of free will?

4. What is the "logical problem of evil"? (*book p. 20*)

5. Does free will help solve the logical problem of evil? How?

6. What is the evidential problem of evil? (*book p. 21*)

7. Explain the difference between "moral evil" and "natural evil".

8. Jones identifies nine reasons people say there is no answer to the problem of evil (*p. 2, heading "E"*). Explain your understanding of two of the most popular or troublesome reasons.

9. Choose one of the three "false starts" Jones identifies (*p. 2, heading "F"*) and explain why it is ill-conceived.

### **Some technical terms:**

Anthropodicy – an attempt to justify the behavior of mankind, usually based on the assumption that people are basically good

Apologetics – arguments and strategies used to defend a system of beliefs; in our context, apologetics is used to defend the Christian faith

Arminian preventient grace – universal grace which precedes and enables the first stirrings of a good will or inclination toward God and explains how the degree to which the Holy Spirit influences a person prior to their coming to faith in Christ

Calvinist election – (also known as unconditional election) means that God does not foresee an action or condition on our part that induces Him to save us. Rather, election rests on God's sovereign decision to save whomever He is pleased to save.

Compatibilism – the belief that free will and determinism are mutually compatible and that it is possible to believe in both without being logically inconsistent.

Depravity – moral corruption; wickedness

Determinism – the belief that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will; some philosophers have taken determinism to imply that individual human beings cannot be held morally responsible for their actions.

Free will, libertarian free will – the ability to make an unconstrained choice between different courses of action; free will implies that God allows people to choose evil or good.

Gratuitous evil – evil that is assumed to have no higher purpose; the idea of gratuitous evil assumes that God has no reason to allow it

Theism – belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially (as contrasted with Deism) belief in one creator god who intervenes and sustains his creation

Theodicy – an explanation of God's good reasons for allowing evil